

Inspection of a good school: Messing Primary School

School Road, Messing, Colchester, Essex CO5 9TH

Inspection date: 27 March 2024

Outcome

There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The school's next inspection will be a graded inspection.

The headteacher of this school is Charlotte Brown. This school is part of New Hall Multi Academy Trust (the trust), which means other people in the trust also have responsibility for running the school. The trust is run by the chief executive officer (CEO), Katherine Jeffrey, and overseen by a board of trustees, chaired by Paul Tiffen.

What is it like to attend this school?

The school is exceptionally warm and welcoming. There are strong, friendly relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils are well looked after and know that there is always someone to help them if they need support.

The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Staff consistently model expected behaviours to pupils. Through this, pupils behave impeccably and are polite to their friends and adults. Older pupils look out for their younger peers and help each other.

There have been recent changes to the curriculum to improve the quality of education that pupils receive. In a few subjects, these changes are not yet fully established. As a result, pupils do not always benefit from teaching that allows them to achieve the ambition of the curriculum.

Pupils' personal development is very well catered for. The school's motto of 'every child, every chance, every day' sits at the heart of this. Despite its small size, the school offers a wide range of opportunities for pupils to experience. These include well-attended clubs, such as gymnastics and orienteering. Pupils value the chance to experience learning in the wider community, through, for example, routine visits to a local orchard, church and farm.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

The school's curriculum has been designed to ensure that pupils can build on their knowledge incrementally, from the early years through to the end of Year 6. Leaders have brought about recent changes to make the curriculum more ambitious. Many of these changes are not yet securely in place.

Staff have strong subject knowledge. They receive regular training to help them teach the curriculum. However, where there have been recent curriculum changes, teachers are less skilled in choosing the most appropriate strategies to help pupils learn the important knowledge that they need to do well. Consequently, pupils are not always given work that builds on what they have learned before. Assessment strategies in some subjects are still at an early stage of development. Too often, teachers' checks do not reliably identify gaps in pupils' knowledge. This means that some pupils do not build on what they know and do not learn as well as they could.

The school has made reading a priority. This starts from the moment children join the Reception class. The school has invested to improve the reading environments and resources for pupils. This includes 'The Lodge', a new purpose-built library area. Parents support the school as librarians and help pupils select and read new books. Pupils enjoy reading and see it as an important skill.

A new phonics teaching programme has been introduced recently. All staff have received training on the new programme. Despite this, there is inconsistency in how well phonics is taught. Staff do not always help pupils to use their phonic knowledge. Pupils do not always get the practice they need to learn letter sounds or how to blend these into words. Subsequently, some pupils do not become confident readers as quickly as they could.

The school identifies the needs of pupils effectively, including pupils with special education needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Teachers receive the information and training they need to support pupils with SEND. Teachers use this information to adapt their teaching to help pupils with SEND learn the curriculum.

Behaviour around the school is calm, polite and respectful. In lessons, pupils are keen to learn and are attentive. They are patient and help their friends if they find things difficult. Pupils learn to be tolerant and understanding of difference. Consequently, pupils see difference as something to be celebrated.

The school provides regular, high-quality opportunities for pupils to make positive and meaningful contributions that benefit the whole school community. These include leadership roles such as house captains and membership of the school council. Pupils value opportunities to present their learning to visitors. Recently, this has included the creation of an ancient Egyptian museum in the school hall.

School leaders want the very best for pupils at this school. This ambition has led to recent changes that, while not yet embedded, have been introduced to improve the offer for pupils. Trustees and governors understand their roles well. Recent changes have

strengthened the local governing body. Staff are proud to work here. They are valued and their professional development is well supported.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- The changes the school has recently made to the curriculum are not yet fully established. Staff do not always use the most appropriate strategies to teach the curriculum as it is intended. They do not consistently use assessment effectively to identify gaps in pupils' understanding. This means that some pupils fall behind because they do not always understand the new knowledge that is being taught. Subsequently, they miss out on learning important subject content. The school should ensure that staff have the expertise and guidance required to teach the intended curriculum well in all subjects.
- Pupils at the early stages of reading do not always receive the guidance and practice they need to use and add to their phonic knowledge. This means they do not read as well as they could. The school should ensure that all staff teach the phonics programme effectively.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in September 2018.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

School details

Unique reference number	139252
Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	10323729
Type of school	Primary
School category	Academy sponsor-led
Age range of pupils	4 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	87
Appropriate authority	Board of trustees
Chair of trust	Paul Tiffen
CEO of the trust	Katherine Jeffrey
Headteacher	Charlotte Brown
Website	www.messingprimaryschool.co.uk
Date(s) of previous inspection	18 and 19 September 2018, under section 5 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- The headteacher took up post in September 2022.
- The school is part of New Hall Multi Academy Trust.
- The school does not currently use alternative provision.

Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

- Inspections are a point-in-time judgement about the quality of a school's education provision.
- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.

- Inspectors met with the headteacher, trustees and governors including the chair of the trust and chair of the local governing body.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and physical education. For each deep dive, inspectors held discussions about the curriculum, visited a sample of lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, inspectors: reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interests first.

Inspection team

Marc White, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Steve Mellors

His Majesty's Inspector

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